

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SNM-02 EB-07 AS-01 /066 W

-----033988 131140Z /14

R 130947Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3804

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL MANDALAY

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 2028

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS, SNAR, BM

SUBJ: BURMESE THWART COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE

1. THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED RANGOON NEWSPAPERS ON JULY 12 PUBLISHED AN ACCOUNT OF THE BURMA ARMY'S SUCCESSFUL COUNTER-OFFENSIVE BETWEEN FEBRUARY AND JUNE AGAINST BURMA COMMUNIST PARTY (BCP) INSURGENTS ATTEMPTING TO ESTABLISH THEMSELVES IN NEW BASE AREAS IN THE SHAN STATE WEST OF THE SALWEEN RIVER AND SOUTH OF THE TAUNGGYI-KENG TUNG ROAD. THE TEXT, ALONG WITH AN ACCOMPANYING MAP, IS BEING POUCHED TO DEPARTMENT (EA/TB). OTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US INDICATES THAT THE PRESS ACCOUNT IS GENERALLY ACCURATE.

2. BEGINNING EARLY THIS YEAR, BCP FORCES MOVED OUT OF THEIR LONG-TIME BASE AREA ALONG THE CHINA BORDER EAST OF THE SALWEEN, WITH THE APPARENT INTENTION OF EXPANDING THEIR AREA OF CONTROL FURTHER WEST AND SOUTH INTO THE SHAN STATE, FIRING UP CONNECTIONS WITH THEIR NZACHIN INDEPENDENCE
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ARMY (KIA) AND SHAN STATE ARMY (SSA) ALLIES, AND CUTTING THE ROAD BETWEEN TAUNGGYI AND KENG TUNG. THE BURMESE ESTIMATE THAT APPROXIMATELY 2200 BCP TROOPS WERE ENGAGED IN THE OFFENSIVE. IF THE BCP EFFORTS HAD SUCCEEDED, ITS TERRITORIAL, POPULATION, AND ECONOMIC BASE (INCLUDING OPIUM) WOULD HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY EXPANDED, AND GUB FORCES AND POPULATION CENTERS IN THE EASTERN SHAN STATE

WOULD HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY ISOLATED AND CUT OFF FROM
LAND RESUPPLY.

3. ELEMENTS OF THE BURMA ARMY'S 77TH AND 88TH LIGHT
INFANTRY DIVISIONS, WITH BURMA AIR FORCE SUPPORT, WERE
ENGAGED AGAINST THE INSURGENTS BEGINNING IN FEBRUARY.
BY THE END OF JUNE, THE OFFENSIVE WAS ESSENTIALLY CRUSHED,
AND BCP FORCES HAD WITHDRAWN BACK TO THEIR TRADITIONAL
BASE AREA. THE OPPOSING FORCES FOUGHT 43 "MAJOR" CLASHES,
MANY OF THEM INVOLVING HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT, AND 51 LESSER
ENGAGEMENTS. THE BURMA ARMY COUNTED 275 ENEMY BODIES KILLED
IN ACTION AND ESTIMATED A TOTAL OF MORE THAN 500 ENEMY
DEAD. BURMA ARMY CASUALTIES WERE 130 KILLED AND 142 WOUNDED.

4. COMMENT: THE BURMESE ARMED FORCES HAVE ONCE AGAIN
DEMONSTRATED THAT THEY ARE CAPABLE OF CONTAINING (THOUGH
NOT NECESSARILY ELIMINATING) THEIR MOST FORMIDABLE INSURGENT
THREAT. THEY HAVE DONE SO, MOREOVER, WITH OBSOLETE
EQUIPMENT AND INADEQUATE SUPPLIES, AND WHILE AT THE
SAME TIME DEVOTING MAJOR RESOURCES AND ATTENTION TO
LESSER INSURGENT ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE SHAN UNITED
ARMY (SUA). THIS IS A MOST ENCOURAGING INDICATION OF
BURMESE DETERMINATION AND ABILITY TO CONTINUE TO DEAL
EFFECTIVELY WITH THE VARIOUS "MULTI-COLORED" INSURGENTS,
MOST OF WHOM ARE ALSO NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS. WITH
PERSISTENCE, LUCK, AND SOME OUTSIDE HELP WITH EQUIPMENT,
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THE BURMESE MAY BE ABLE TO MOVE BEYOND CONTAINMENT TOWARD
ELIMINATION OF THE LONGSTANDING SHAN STATE INSURGENCY
PROBLEM.
OSBORN

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